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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 001469

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/03/2018

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [KPKO](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: GOSS CONTEMPLATES RANSOM PAYMENT FOR TANKS

REF: NAIROBI 2290

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Government of Southern Sudan Minister for Internal Affairs Paul Mayom Akec told CG Juba October 1 that the Government of Southern Sudan was preparing to pay a ransom to the Somali pirates holding the SPLA,s long-awaited arms shipment) should there be a drop in price. &We are scraping the funds together,8 he noted, &and are currently prepared to offer up to USD \$2 million.8 In parallel to its preparations for a possible pay-off, Mayom further allowed that the GOSS had tapped an SPLA military intelligence officer to lead discussions with the Government of Ethiopia in hopes of securing Addis,s commitment to pressure the pirates. (COMMENT: Whether this was a request for pressure in order to reduce the ransom price or release the vessel without a ransom was unclear. The GOSS believes the pirates are aligned with the pro-Ethiopia Transitional Federal Government forces, and that Addis might be able to enlist assistance from within Somalia to temper the pirates, demands. END COMMENT.)

12. (C) GOSS confidence in the possibility of U.S. assistance in the retrieval of its cargo is growing increasingly thin. Anguished requests by senior GOSS and SPLA officials for confirmation of rumored American &special forces operations8 have gone unanswered, and high profile media speculation about the cargo,s destination has only fueled GOSS nervousness about a possible backlash from the National Congress Party. Minister for Regional Cooperation Barnaba Marial Benjamin reached CG Juba via presidential staffers traveling with a U.S. trade delegation in Western Bahr el Ghazal state on September 30 to formally note the Government of Southern Sudan,s concern over statements attributed to U.S. Navy,s 5th Fleet Public Affairs staff. A September 30 LA Times story asserted that American military officials had confirmed that the shipment was bound for southern Sudan. The article had been forwarded to 14 out of Juba,s 19-member diplomatic corps by 1:00PM, in addition to its circulation within a sizable contingent of UNMIS. SPLA Chief of General Staff Oyai Deng Ajak reached CG Juba that same day to offer mild criticism, contending that &I thought you Americans were better at keeping things in your hearts,8 before noting he had personally received inquiries from donor nations referencing the article as he was pressed for comment.

13. (C) Ajak and Regional Cooperation Undersecretary Cirino Hiteng Ofuho told CDA Fernandez in Juba September 27 (during a formal request for U.S. intervention to help resolve the situation) that the cargo aboard the Ukrainian vessel was the second of three weapons/armor shipments procured by the SPLA from unspecified vendors in Eastern Europe in 2006. Ajak

claimed that the price of each tank was \$260,000, and noted that when Kampala entered into a similar transaction last year, its military paid \$560,000 per tank. Mayom confirmed that an additional shipment of tanks was expected &in addition to a few other high-value consignments.⁸ CDA explained that the ability of the U.S. Government to be of assistance in such matters was limited when both the GOSS and the SPLA were not more forthcoming. Mayom accepted the point, and agreed that more could be done to &be more open with our friends.⁸ He noted that he and Ajak had recently concluded discussions with Kenyan Defense Minister Yusuf Hadji on what he termed &an extended agreement⁸ on end-user certificates, and that Mayom would likely be in a position to share additional information in the coming weeks on more recent purchases.

¶4. (C) Comment: This incident has been an embarrassment for the GOSS and the SPLA, and the statements attributed to Lt. Christensen did not help the situation. The USG will need to be increasingly tight-lipped about the pirated goods, especially as Mayom is correct that there may well be a public back-lash from the NCP (although the NCP is well aware of arms shipments to the SPLA and knew about the tank sales long ago). While the NCP already knew about the shipment, the public exposure increases tensions between the CPA parties unnecessarily.
FERNANDEZ